



Final notes of ESCCAP *Toxocara* 2012, Budapest, 3rd to 5th October 2012

Maggie Fisher*, Robin B. Gasser

Shernacre Enterprise Ltd, The Mews Studio, Portland Road, Malvern WR14 2TA, UK

After the final session on Veterinary Aspects of *Toxocara* and Toxocarosis, held on the morning of the 5th October, a summary and concluding session took place.

The themes and topics of the conference were summarised by Robin who reflected on the number of unknowns and knowledge gaps in this important area, which had been identified from the presentations during the two days and were recorded and amplified by Maggie Fisher. The audience at the meeting was an interdisciplinary group involved in different aspects of *Toxocara* research and as such had a major passion for the subject area.

The need for good diagnostic tools was self-evident and is a prerequisite for epidemiological studies and the ability to differentiate infection from disease. Better understanding of taxonomy (by using, for example, molecular approaches) together with the use of bioinformatics (as illustrated by Ray Dillon's paper) for understanding disease, are examples of how new technologies could be used to advance understanding.

Robin emphasized the value of how moving forward with an interdisciplinary interest group and that engages with other across disciplines to address some of the research questions could be fruitful. He closed by posing a series of questions to the audience: How might the network continue? What were the priorities, moving forwards? What funding opportunities might exist? He proposed that a public-private partnership might, at least in part, address some of the funding issues.

The main issues covered and emphasized at this meeting were:

Network:

1. Establishment of an interest/working group concerning *Toxocara*, with or without other zoonotic species included. This could take the form of a European Network of Excellence.

Priorities:

1. Need for original and basic data on prevalence and impact of disease.
2. Need for "hard data" on human toxocarosis (with controls).
3. Clinicians must be more involved in the diagnosis/report of human disease - particularly ophthalmologists, due to the impact of the Ocular Larval syndrome.
4. Improved diagnostics are essential for fundamental and applied research.
5. Harmonization of methodologies and techniques is considered essential.

Funding:

1. Financing could come from industry involvement.
2. Industry perspective: interest to support new initiatives whether from the veterinary or medical perspective.

In the concluding session, other comments were captured from members of the audience and the main ideas/suggestions were:

- (a) These meetings concerning *Toxocara* should take place on a more frequent basis, perhaps every three years, and a special group should be founded as an important focal point for gathering data and ideas and in order to lobby.
- (b) Something should arise from this meeting as an outcome for both the medical and veterinary professions/communities.

* Tel.: +44 1684 568998.

E-mail address: fishermaggie@btinternet.com (M. Fisher).

- (c) It was seen from the first session that the human aspect and the impact of the disease should have greater emphasis. Effort must be put into identifying practitioners and ophthalmologists interested in toxocarosis, so that they can disseminate information and bring data to the forefront!
- (d) Applying for any EU funding for a future network concerning this parasite must proceed with caution, demonstrating carefully the interest in studying these agents/diseases, both on animal and human sides.
- (e) In the case of applying for a COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) action, other parasites could be added for a successful proposal (e.g., other geohelminths, or neglected parasites, or neglected zoonotic parasites), since the mentioned action can have a very high cost.
- (f) In the first instance, ESCCAP is willing to coordinate communication.